



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

News *Release*

www.dshs.wa.gov

MAY 13, 2009

NO. 009-082

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[Doug Porter](#), Assistant Secretary, Health and Recovery Services Administration, 360-725-1867

[Troy Hutson](#), Assistant Secretary, Economic Services Administration, DSHS, 360-725-4351

[Marilyn Olson](#), Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe, 360-297-9636

[Colleen Cawston](#), Indian Policy Support Services Director, DSHS, (360) 902-7816

[Deborah Sosa](#), Native Health Program Manager, HRSA, DSHS, 360-725-1649

[Rebecca Henrie](#), Project Coordinator, ESA, DSHS 360-725-4615

State, Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe sign historic agreement on food and medical assistance eligibility

KINGSTON, Wash. -- The Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe and the Department of Social and Health Services signed an historic agreement this week that will allow the Tribe to make Basic Food and Medicaid eligibility decisions for tribal families.

“The Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe has been involved in many pilot programs, and we are especially happy to be part of this milestone regarding eligibility determinations,” said Tribal Chair Ron Charles, noting it is the first such agreement among U.S. Medicaid or food programs.

The agreement – which has been in the works for years, dating back to the administration of former Gov. Gary Locke – was only recently approved by all three participating governments – state, federal and tribal. It was formally signed on Monday at the Port Gamble S’Klallam Reservation Longhouse in a ceremony that included traditional songs, dances and several speakers.

“This is another step forward in the relationship between the State of Washington and the 29 federally recognized tribes that exist in its boundaries,” said Interim DSHS Secretary Stan Marshburn. “The success of this agreement will pave the way for other Tribes across the state to expand their programs and services as well.”

The Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe has a history of success working with DSHS, beginning with their Tribal TANF program in 1998 and their child support program in 2002. The Tribe’s exception is now part of the State Medicaid Plan, a contract between the state and the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The Medicaid program is operated under the agency’s Health and Recovery Services Administration. The agreement also includes the Economic Services Administration of DSHS, which partners with the U. S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) for Basic Food.

-more-

Page 2: First-ever agreement between Washington State and Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe

Both federal agencies have approved the pilot project for their respective programs. Economic Services Administration facilitated getting FNS to approve this demonstration project – the first of its kind in the nation – to allow the Tribe to process Basic Food requests. The Tribe will determine program eligibility on the national level for FNS to evaluate, as well as for the state.

“In effect, this sets up a framework that will allow the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe to function as a pilot project,” said Doug Porter, Assistant Secretary for Health and Recovery Services Administration. “The Tribe will be able to determine eligibility for Categorically Needy services for families, children and pregnant women in households that contain at least one tribal member.”

“One of our overarching goals is to reduce poverty and hunger in Washington state through strategic partnerships,” said Troy Hutson, Assistant Secretary for the Economic Services Administration. “We recognize the Tribes are in the best position to help their families. The ability to offer vital programs and services here, where tribal families are located, provides a powerful tool for fighting poverty and hunger on the reservation.”

In the past, the Tribe has had to channel these eligibility decisions through a DSHS branch office, even though that involved duplication of tribal social service efforts. Allowing the Tribe to use its own resources made more sense, provided the federal rules could be waived.

Last August, the State Medicaid program and the Suquamish Tribe signed another landmark health-care agreement that allows tribal youth direct access to state-managed Medicaid-linked mental health services. Specifically, the agreement gives the tribe easier access to the Medicaid-funded Children’s Long-Term Inpatient Program.

FOR ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND, CONTACT:

Jim Stevenson, Communications Director, HRSA, DSHS, 360-902-7604 (Pager: 360-971-4067).

EDITORS:

For an electronic photo of the signing ceremony, please e-mail SteveJH2@dshs.wa.gov.

DSHS does not discriminate and provides equal access to its programs and services for all persons without regard to race, color, gender, religion, creed, marital status, national origin, sexual orientation, age, veteran’s status or the presence of any physical, sensory or mental disability.

Page 2: First-ever agreement between Washington State and Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe



Ceremonial dances and songs helped celebrate the historic agreement between Washington State and the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe this week.